

Burnt Island

On a tiny island off the coast of Boothbay Harbor, our fifth grade class recently had a grand adventure. Our adventure included: the challenges of tenting out, learning new skills and information, experiencing outdoor learning, and meeting new people.



Our exciting trip began when our fifth grade class loaded onto a boat called Ms. Boothbay, and traveled south towards Burnt Island. The Captain circled the island once so we would all get a view of things to come. The first thing I remember seeing was a beautiful lighthouse setting high up on the rocks, trees covering most of the island, and white waves coming in and out.

Once all the gear was unloaded, the class worked together to carry it to the tent sites. This was my first experience camping out! I learned how to pitch a tent, that if you don't use a ground cloth you'll have a soggy sleeping bag, put your feet downhill so you won't roll at night, and you'd better keep your tent neat because you never know when Mrs. Jones might do a tent inspection.

The three days on the island were filled with learning, and we didn't even use books! The first day, we started out playing Island Bingo. This neat game got us out exploring the island looking for creatures like osprey, mink, beach fleas, and pill bugs. I also never knew that sand could be so interesting. When looking through a microscope, we discovered Burnt Island sand is actually made up of tiny pieces of rock, dead sea animals, and magnetic rock. We went jelly fishing off the dock and found out how rare it is to find them because they only come to the surface during a certain time. When I carefully touched one, it felt like jelly! Sport fishing on the dock was also fun, even though we didn't catch anything. I think we would all be okay if anyone in the class ever got lost. We had a great unit on survival. Not only did we learn about signaling for help, we also made a jacket out of a trash bag. In small groups, we worked together and constructed survival shelters out of things found in the woods and on the beach. Using charts and compasses were interesting, but the best part was finding a hidden treat on the treasure hunt in the dark at night.

One special thing we did was to give ourselves island names. We found out Sea Dog had the best memory and could remember names like: Jelly Fishy, Barnacle Head Boy, Horseshoe, Eeler, Squidy, Seaweed Peter, Sea star, Seahorse, Seagully, Muscleman, Starboard, Lobsta, Clammy, Cucumber, Patstar, Neon, Minka, Jellyfish, Hightide, Periwinkle, Skippa, and Keepa!

I am glad we got to know Mrs. Jones, the lighthouse keeper. She made our visit full of surprises and fun. She shared with us the history of the lighthouse and great stories about some of the keepers before her. Our last day on Burnt Island, Mrs. Jones told us about ghosts on the island, but we didn't meet any of them. This is the first lighthouse I have ever been in. I never knew a light could be so bright or that a foghorn could be so annoying. I really had a great time on the island! I am very glad the Department of Marine Resources has provided this wonderful opportunity for children like me.

Friday was our last day to be in this very special place. As Ms. Boothbay headed back to the mainland, the last thing I remember seeing was that beautiful white lighthouse setting high up on the rocks, and the small clump of trees we built our shelter in, and the large rocks we climbed upon and searched for sea stars and periwinkles. I will always remember the learning and fun I had on Burnt Island, my fifth grade friends, and our great teacher Mrs. O'Brien.



Written and presented by Andrea Brooks at the Burnt Island Dedication Ceremony.



Students place intertidal creatures into the artificial tide pool.



Searching for life in a tide pool.



Benton Elementary School's Fifth Grade Class.



"Survivor" Burnt Island
Building a shelter using washed up debris.



Sport fishing off the dock.



Learning about the dynamics of a beach.